

Claims

[c0001] 1. A method for harvesting fruit from a field comprising the steps of:

- a) providing a plurality of workers;
- b) providing a vehicle with tires adapted for travel across a field, said vehicle having a pair of conveyors in linear relationship to one another and which laterally extend from said vehicle across a plurality of rows, each conveyor comprising a conveyor belt and a trough positioned above said conveyor belt in fixed relation thereto, where both the conveyor belt and trough are sufficiently sized for accepting flats, said vehicle further having a pallet conveyor spanning the width of said vehicle and in parallel relationship to said pair of conveyors;
- c) aligning said vehicle so that said pair of conveyors span a plurality of rows from which fruit is to be inspected;
- d) displacing said vehicle from one end of the field to the other while workers standing behind said conveyors harvest ripened fruit into flats which when filled, are placed onto one of said conveyor belts which transport the flats to an unloading position;
- e) removing said filled flats from said conveyors and pal-

letizing said filled flats on pallets located upon said pallet conveyor;

f) changing the horizontal orientation of said tires for travel along the edge of the field without altering the orientation of the vehicle relative to the field;

g) traveling a distance until the conveyors of said vehicle span different rows of fruit to be inspected;

h) arc displacing said conveyors substantially 180 degrees over the vehicle to the opposite side;

i) changing the horizontal orientation of said tires for travel across the field; and,

j) repeating steps d-i as necessary until the field has been traversed.

[c0002] 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said vehicle further comprises a plurality of removable shelves attached to a respective conveyor.

[c0003] 3. A vehicle for traversing across a field for harvesting fruit which comprises a pair of conveyors and a means for operational support and attachment of each conveyor to the vehicle, where each conveyor is positioned to be behind the path of travel of the vehicle across a field, and where each conveyor is of a sufficient length to span a plurality of rows of fruit, the improvement comprising: where said means for attachment of each conveyor to the vehicle comprises a respective displaceable arm for each

conveyor, where each of said displaceable arms is operably connected on one end to said vehicle and on the other end connected to a respective conveyor; and, each of said displaceable arms capable of displacing a respective conveyor in a substantially 180 degree arc over said vehicle.

[c0004] 4. The vehicle of claim 3 further comprising:
a hydraulic leveling device operatively connected to said conveyor for maintaining the vertical orientation of said conveyor as it is displaced by said displaceable arm in a substantially 180 degree arc over said vehicle.

[c0005] 5. The vehicle of claim 3 further comprising a set of floodlights operatively mounted on said machine to facilitate harvesting operations at night time.

[c0006] 6. The vehicle of claim 4 further comprising a set of floodlights operatively mounted on said machine to facilitate harvesting operations at night time.

[c0007] 7. The vehicle of claim 3 further comprising a pallet conveyor, a work platform located on either side of said pallet conveyor, and two sets of tires operatively attached to said vehicle to engage the ground surface, one tire set located on one side of said pallet conveyor and the second tire set located on the opposite side of said pallet

conveyor, the spacing between each tire of each said tire set being adjustable to adapt said vehicle for operation in fields having different row spacing.

[c0008] 8. The vehicle of claim 4 further comprising a set of floodlights operatively mounted on said machine to facilitate harvesting operations at night time.